

Message Text

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60

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 USIE-00

AGR-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 AID-20 CIEP-02

CEA-02 SIL-01 LAB-06 INRE-00 SSO-00 OPR-02 SY-04

DRC-01 NSCE-00 /150 W

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O 281704Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 682

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 2889

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRD, PN, CS, HO

SUBJ: POSSIBLE DANGER TO STANDARD EMPLOYEES ARISING
FROM BANAMA PROBLEM

REF: SAN JOSE 1901

SUMMARY: HIGH LEVEL GOP SOURCE HAS QUOTED BANANA UNION REPRESENTATIVES FROM COSTA RICA AND HONDURAS AS MAKING THREATS AGAINST THE LIVES OF HIGH LEVEL STANDARD FRUIT OFFICIALS. ALTHOUGH THIS MAY ONLY BE A PRESSURE TACTIC TO INDICATE SOLIDARITY OF WORKERS WITH THEIR GOVERNMENTS, EMBASSIES MAY WISH TO INFORM COMPANY. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED INFORMATION EMANATING FROM A HIGH LEVEL GOP SOURCE THAT SITUATION OF STANDARD FRUIT IN COSTA RICA AND HONDURAS MAY BE WORSE THAN COMPANY REALIZES. DURING RECENT MEETINGS IN SAN JOSE ON BANANAS, TWO MEMBERS OF BANANA UNIONS (ONE FROM COSTA RICA AND ONE FROM HONDURAS) SAID THAT STANDRAD'S WAY OF HANDLING THE IMPOSITION
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OF TAX HAD AFFRONTED DIGNITY OF COUNTRIES INVOLVED

AND THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY BANANA WORKERS COULD DEMONSTRATE THEIR WILL TO DEFEND THEIR GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS. THIS WOULD BE FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE COMPANY USING THE "LAW OF THE MACHETE", MEANING THEY WOULD CHOP OFF THE HEADS OF HIGH LEVEL COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES IF STANDARD CONTINUED TO TAKE ACTIONS OFFENSIVE TO THE DIGNITY OF THE TWO COUNTRIES. THEY SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH THEY EXPECTED TO BE SENT TO JAIL, THEY HAD BEEN IN JAIL BEFORE AND WOULD NOT EXPECT TO BE THERE LONG. SOURCE REMARKED THAT SUCH VIOLENCE AGAINST COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES POSSIBLE IF THE GOVERNMENTS DO NOT TAKE SUFFICIENT PROTECTIVE MEASURES.

COMMENT: IT IS POSSIBLE THAT GOP SOURCE ONLY TRYING TO DRAMATIZE THE SOLIDARITY OF WORKERS WITH THE GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR ACTIONS TO IMPOSE BANANA TAX. HOWEVER, IT WOULD NOT BE FIRST TIME THAT BANANA WORKERS HAVE RESORTED TO VIOLENCE - LAST INSTANCE OF HOMICIDE COMMITTED AGAINST BANANA OFFICIAL IN PANAMA OCCURRED ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO. ADDRESSEE EMBASSIES MAY WISH TO ADVISE COMPANIES OF ABOVE THREAT.

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